

Gaza records first polio case in 25 years as UN calls for truce

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Gaza City, August 17 (RHC)-- The Gaza Health Ministry said on Friday that health conditions in the strip are “challenging” which caused the emergence of the polio virus in the territory.

The Health Ministry in Gaza has said that it detected the first polio case in the besieged strip, hours after UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a truce to vaccinate hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children.

The Health Ministry said in a statement on Friday that health conditions in the Gaza Strip are “challenging” which caused the emergence of the virus in the territory.

Poliovirus is highly infectious. It is most often spread through sewage and contaminated water. The virus can cause deformities and paralysis and is potentially fatal. It mainly affects children under the age of five.

“Amid the challenging health conditions in the Gaza Strip, including the spread of infectious diseases, the overflow of sewage into streets and among displaced persons' tents, and the lack of personal hygienic supplies and clean drinking water, the Ministry of Health confirms the following after laboratory confirmation of a polio case in a child exhibiting polio-like symptoms,” the health ministry statement said.

“Several specialized committees have been formed to carry out various tasks aimed at limiting the spread of the polio epidemic,” it added. “These efforts involve collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNRWA, and several experts,” it said.

The health ministry in Ramallah said tests in Jordan confirmed the virus in an unvaccinated 10-month-old from the central Gaza Strip.

According to the United Nations, Gaza has not registered a polio case for 25 years. “Doctors suspected the presence of symptoms consistent with polio,” the health ministry said. “After conducting the necessary tests in the Jordanian capital, Amman, the infection was confirmed.”

The case emerged shortly after the UN chief called for two seven-day breaks in Israel’s genocidal war to vaccinate more than 640,000 children.

The UN health and children's agencies said they had made detailed plans to reach children across the besieged Palestinian territory and could start this month, AFP reported.

But that would require pauses in the 10-month-old war, they said. “Preventing and containing the spread of polio will take a massive, coordinated and urgent effort,” Guterres told reporters at UN headquarters in New York. “I am appealing to all parties to provide concrete assurances right away guaranteeing humanitarian pauses for the campaign.”

The World Health Organization and UN children's fund UNICEF said they planned two seven-day vaccination drives across the Gaza Strip, starting in late August, against type 2 poliovirus (cVDPV2).

Last month, it was announced that type 2 poliovirus had been detected in samples collected in Gaza on June 23rd.

Despite the ceasefire talks underway in Qatar, the Israeli regime is pushing ahead with its air and artillery attacks in the besieged Gaza Strip as the genocidal war enters its eleventh month.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep up the war until, what he has called, the “elimination” of Hamas, a prospect that has been ruled out as impossible by the group and even some Israeli officials and Tel Aviv’s allies.

The latest massacres have raised the number of Palestinians killed to over 40,000 leaving more than 92,400 others injured.



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